

Claims:

1. Use of a laminate having an inner layer which contains a polyolefin, an outer layer which contains a polyester, a polyolefin or a polyamide and an intermediate layer which contains a silicon oxide in the manufacture of a barrier material to ethylene oxide gas.

2. Use according to claim 1, characterised in that the polyolefin is a polypropylene or a polyethylene.

3. Use according to claim 1 or 2, characterised in that the polyester for the outer layer of the laminate is polyethylene terephthalate.

4. Use according to claim 1, 2 or 3, characterised in that the polyamide is nylon.

5. Use according to any one of claims 1 to 4, characterised in that the silicon oxide-containing intermediate layer is a layer of silicon oxide deposited in-between the facing surfaces of the inner and outer layers.

6. Use according to any one of claims 1 to 4, characterised in that the intermediate layer is a composite layer comprising the silicon oxide and a polymeric matrix or substrate therefor.

7. Use according to claim 6, characterised in that the matrix or substrate is of a polyester, a polyamide, a polypropylene or a polyvinyl alcohol.

8. Use according to claim 7, characterised in that the polyester for the matrix or substrate is polyethylene terephthalate.

9. Use according to claim 7, characterised in that the polyamide for the matrix or substrate is nylon.

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10 Use according to claim 1, characterised in that the laminate has an inner layer of polypropylene, an outer layer of polyethylene terephthalate and an intermediate composite layer of a silicon oxide with polyethylene terephthalate or polyvinyl alcohol.

11. A container (6; 106) which has been exposed to ethylene oxide gas characterised in that the container is formed from a laminate having an inner layer which contains a polyolefin, an outer layer which contains a polyester, a polyolefin or a polyamide and an intermediate layer which contains a silicon oxide.

10 12. An assembly (10; 110) which has been exposed to ethylene oxide gas comprising an article (3; 103) sterilised by the ethylene oxide gas and a sealed container (6; 106) formed from a laminate having an inner layer which contains a polyolefin, an outer layer which contains a polyester, a polyolefin or a polyamide and an intermediate layer which contains a silicon oxide.

15 13. An assembly according to claim 12, characterised in that the assembly is a medical assembly with the article being a medical instrument (3; 103) for use in a medical procedure and the container containing an article or substance which is to be applied to the instrument as part of the medical procedure.

20 14. An assembly according to claim 13, characterised in that the medical instrument is a hydrophilic outer surface coated urethral catheter (3; 103) and the container is a wetting fluid container (6; 106) which contains a sterile wetting fluid for wetting of the hydrophilic coating of the catheter prior to use.

25 15. An assembly according to any one of claims 12 to 14, characterised in that the sealed container is an inner container and that the assembly further comprises an outer container (1; 101) having an inner volume accessed by the ethylene oxide gas and in which the inner container and article are disposed.

16. An assembly according to claim 15, characterised in that the assembly is a sealed storage package with the outer container being the packaging in which the article and inner container are kept until they are required to be used.

17. An assembly according to claim 15 when appendant to claim 14, characterised in that the outer container is a urine collection bag (1; 101).

18. An assembly according to any one of claims 12 to 15 or 17, characterised in that the assembly is contained in a storage package.

19. A storage package which contains a medical instrument (3; 103) having a hydrophilic outer surface coating and a sealed container (6; 106) which contains a sterile wetting fluid for wetting of the hydrophilic coating of the instrument and which is constructed from a laminate having an inner layer which contains a polyolefin, an outer layer which contains a polyester, a polyolefin or a polyamide and an intermediate layer which contains a silicon oxide.

20. A storage package according to claim 19, characterised in that the medical instrument is a urethral catheter for bladder drainage (3; 103).

21. A storage package according to claim 20, characterised in that the package further contains a urine collection bag (1; 101).

22. A process for forming a storage package containing a medical instrument (3; 103) having a hydrophilic outer surface coating and a wetting fluid container (6; 106) which contains a wetting fluid for wetting of the hydrophilic outer surface coating of the medical instrument comprising the steps of forming the wetting fluid container from a laminate having an inner layer which contains a polyolefin, an outer layer which contains a polyester, a polyolefin or a polyamide and an intermediate layer which contains a silicon

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oxide, subjecting the container to a steam or gamma radiation sterilising process to sterilise the wetting fluid in the container, assembling the medical instrument and sterilised wetting fluid container together into an assembly, subjecting the assembly to an ethylene oxide gas sterilising process to sterilise the medical instrument and enclosing the sterilised assembly
5 in a storage package container.

23. An assembly (10; 110) substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to Fig. 1 or Figs 2 to 8 of the accompanying drawings.

10 24. A storage package substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to Fig. 1 or Figs 2 to 8 of the accompanying drawings.

15 25. A process for forming a storage package containing a medical instrument (3; 103) having a hydrophilic outer surface coating and a wetting fluid container (6; 106) which contains a wetting fluid for wetting of the hydrophilic outer surface coating of the medical instrument substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to Fig. 1 or Figs 2 to 8 of the accompanying drawings.

20 26. A container substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to Fig. 1 or Figs 2 to 8 of the accompanying drawings.

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